GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:24
ANSWERED ON:19.02.2003
LOSS OF EYE SIGHT
PUTTASWAMY GOWDA;V. VETRISELVAN

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether frequent incidents of loss of eye sight are being reported from different parts of the country due to cataract surgery in free eye camps being organised by private organisations in the country;

(b) if so, the details of such incidents which came to the notice of the Government during the last one year;

(c) whether the Union Government have issued any directions to the State Governments in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the remedial measures taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a)to(e): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 24 FOR 19.2.2003

It is not true that the incidents of loss of eye sight due to cataract surgery in free eye camps are very frequent. Three such mishaps have been reported since January, 2002. These mishaps occurred in the district of Bhuj (Gujarat) (May 2002), Ludhiana (Punjab) (November 2002) and Theni (Tamil Nadu) (January 2003).71 persons reportedly lost their vision after cataract surgery in these mishaps, as against more than 37 lakhs cataract operations performed in the country during 2001-02. In the current year, the target for such operations is 40 lakhs against which till December 2002, 24 lakh operations have taken place.

Cataract surgery is encouraged at fixed facilities both in Government and Non-Government sectors.To facilitate this, construction of eye-wards and dedicated eye operation theatres have been supported in over 300 places in Government sector and more than 34 NGOs. More than 90% of the surgeries are now performed in hospitals where modern intra-ocular Lens (I.O.L.) implantation can also be undertaken.

Specific guidelines have been issued to all the District Blindness Control Societies and State Governments/UTs asking them not to conduct cataract eye surgery in eye-camps in school buildings, dharmashalas, public buildings and in open premises. Only in exceptional circumstances, where infrastructure with operation theatre is not available, and when the Chief Medical Officer is satisfied that proper facilities for sterilization, follow-up action etc. are ensured, conducting of surgeries in eye camps are permitted outside hospitals. To ensure high quality of surgery, clinical practice modules on quality assurance in cataract surgery and general precautions to safeguard against post-operative infections have been issued by Government of India.